ODE

ON THE CORONATION OF KING EDWARD VII.

BY GEORGE W. GROTE.

I.

To know, or to believe, or to divide
Unerringly 'twixt knowledge and belief—
Either, or all—were well, but who shall set
Religion or philosophy in bounds
Where failure falls on highest purposes,
Or higher faith, from seeming failure, grows!
Day unto day, the year had half revolved,
And June grew fateful in momentous hours.
Lo where our labouring wheels of empire clomb,
High on the pillared clouds, from peak to peak!
Thrice more might Hesper seek the westering wave,
And, Phosphor-like, smile on the blush of dawn,
Ere Edward, King of England, should be crowned.
Thrice more might all our laurels, counted o'er,
Recall the garlanded wild olive, and
The victor on the far Olympian field,
Ere June might weave a chaplet for the king.
And on that day, howe'er so high the theme
That should extol the kingly majesty,
It had been ours to sing of valorous arms.
But then, alas, our songs might not be sung!
What our Imperial race had named to be
So greatly wrought within the leafy June,
Fell, by a zephyr stricken, and was naught.
Amazement reigned o'er horror and dismay.

The kingly glory of earth's utmost goal
Lacked but a ray of light from Phœbus' wheel,
When lo the darkness of a noonday night
Shot where the flashes of the lightning led;
Nor was there void or vagueness in the Voice,
Nor spectral shade of evanescent power;
But, over vain and mute imaginings,
Our faith grew larger where we could not see [hope;
Nor know. Thought fled on heavenward wings of
And answered prayer brought this—the wider—day;
Whereto that June day, as a torrent, pours
Its power, as, oft, the mountain river heaps
Its wealth upon some broadly flowing stream
Whose mighty current bears the ocean back.
So shall this day's entreasured flood o'erflow
The viewless rim of the great sea of time,
Where float the shining prows of ages past,
Forth where the golden shores of Delos lie.
Lo where the orient veils the jewelled morn!

II.

The summer night is past, th' inviolate vault,
Gem-flashing, waits Britannia's waking world,
Wherein the sweet solemnity of prayer,
Ere yet the glamour of the dewdrop gleams,
Upsprings on the ethereal wings of morn.
Lo where Aurora binds about her brow
A pale corona in the orient arch,
Unfolds the veil of England's wakeful night
And flames aloft a new historic day!
Lo now the ruddy king of light appears,
And launches forth his morning messengers
In glittering shafts along the dancing sea!
Forth from the gleaming crown and toppling towers
Of Saint Elias—Lord of the Northern Zone—
A hundred arctic streams of molten frost,
Piercing the clouds, make merry where they delve

The canyons whose unfathomed walls entomb
The frozen winters of a thousand years.
Now solar lustre feeds the thirsty flowers,
And laughter lingers in the silver bells.

III.

For laughter loves to help in realms of light,
And, like the babbling mountain stream, to delve
Where darkness reigns and glacial shadows lie,
That what may long to be lift up may live.
So let the day be merry, and every hour
Bubbling with life and loyalty and song,
That memory, oft, therein may freely dwell.
And let the darkling glen, the sunlight-shaft,
The spruce and tamarind, the stately pine,
The bank whereon "the nodding violet grows,"—
All these—breathe votive incense to the day,
And join their music to the memories
Awakened by the linnet and the thrush,
The wren, the robin and th' entrancing lark.
And now, the morning flashes broad and clear;
From beetling cliff to cliff the sea-mew calls,
Where the sea-diver, fearless, cleaves the foam;
And, soul to soul, and voice to voice, the choirs
Of nature carol to the murmuring caves
Where the waves break upon the sounding shore.

IV.

And so the voices blend, whereto we build
The life and music of this lasting day;
And, as the music of the memories
Lives in the voluntary bond of love,
In retrospection of some duty done,
Or of the winning of some soul's reward;
So, when the song-bird sings or pine tree sighs,
Or the wild curlew challenges the storm,

Love lives anew, life leaps to high resolve,
And courage knows less peril in the deep.
Thus, from Britannia, Greater Britain grows;
For courage, love and duty build the state.
Yet music is not all in memories;
The voices of each day new songs awake,
To higher hopes inspire, and higher aims;
The pattering, pelting rain upon the roof
Laughs with the rippling rattle of the hail;
The softly falling snowflake tempers the blast;
Loud though his voice, the lion's imperious roar
Mars not the gentle voice of the nightingale;
The zephyr, into flowing billows, bends
The ripening field of molten golden grain,
And, whispering low to the prevailing gale,
Finds a safe haven for the stately craft.

V.

And as the zephyr and the northern blast,
And all the voices of the natural world,
Find, each, a mutual complementary help,
So is the power of our Imperial realm,
In harmony and bonds invisible
Joined in allegiance and commutual voice.
And so our music, flowing sweet and low,
Inspires a patriot flame within the fires
Aglow and flashing on the outer walls—
The sea-girt walls of our far-lying lands—
Ben Ledi sings an Himalayan hymn;
For India hears the call of Scotland yet.
The ripple of the black tarn lightly rules
The matchless waves of broad Superior;
The Continental Island-Commonwealth
Wafts gentle breezes to the Isle of Wight;
For tarns and islet-homes may rule the waves
And continents, while yet they rule by love.
By magic art and Celtic minstrelsy

The meeting waters of Killarney charm
The dreamers of the slumbering Windermere,
And—lake for lake—a Briton, bending o'er
Their glassy plain, sees, deeply mirrored there,
A pledge to Celt and Saxon brotherhood;
Sees Britons as they are—one family;
Comrades in arms—Norman, Saxon and Celt—
Lovers of peace, wakeful, ever, for war;
Victors in death, as were the men of Thebes—
Epaminondas and Pelopidas—
Or marching to the songs of victory,
Over the Rand and veldt beyond the Vaal.
What power shall know, or stay the steady flow
When Cam and Isis, and the Liffey join
The Fraser and the whelming avalanche,
Tumbling and roaring down the Columbian peaks,
And surging forward for one common goal,
One government, one fatherland, one flag!
The noisy torrents to the corries leap,
Join forces, dauntless, where the Corra falls,
And measure voices with the caves profound—
And roar abysmal—of Niagara,
Whose deafening pillars, plunging, rise, and set,
Precipitous, above the brink, the Bow
Of Promise—emblem of Divine good will,
And arch of universal amity—
There shall Britannia, peace-compelling, rest,
While rhythmic voices from the summer clouds,
And prismic hostages shall peace restore,
Or ever England's squadrons of the air,
Swift-sailing, speak, and shake the solid ground.

VI.

Nor are the summer mountains of the sky
Mere arbiters or witnesses for peace;
Nor merely "castles in the clouds that pass";
Who shall explore their vaulted palaces

Or tell their towers or battlements, or spell
The story of their ivory monuments!
Look where he may on this exultant day,
A Briton shall but read of kingly power;
Then, for a day, these towering clouds are ours:
They lend themselves to forms majestical;
To lore of legends and mythologies;
They turn to deities; to temples turn;
And speak, anon, of Greek philosophy.
Mark yonder snow-clad hills and granite crags;
And with what patriot eloquence they stand
For England and for Scotland's men o' the north!
Well may we pause, and learn from Grecian fame,
What wealth have we, of liberty and power.
And, as the majesty of Homer's men,
A lasting pathway for the Greeks illumed,
Where greatness grew, from valourous deeds of arms,
And rhythmic measures, and Olympian games;
To sculpture, painting, and the Parthenon;
And the orations of Demosthenes;
So shall the men of Theocratic days,
Or of historic name and Grecian blood,
Whose god-like forms adorn the summer clouds,
Prepare for Britain a perpetual path—
For greatness challenges comparison—
And ever shall the men of England know,
One path led Nelson and the Argonauts;
One pathway led the men of the Light Brigade,
And the Defenders of Thermopylæ;
The "red pursuing spear" of Marathon
Flashed for freedom, on Khartoum's fateful field.
Then turn we to the clouds and view the hills
Whereto came Cecrops, and where Pelops came.
What Greeks, immortal, along the fore-front range—
As might the fearless men of Ashtaroth,
Along the shadowy valleys of Lebanon,
Where Tabor stands, or where the Arnon flows,
Down from the wooded heights of Hermon wind—
Behold where Sparta's great Leonidas

Beside Lycurgus, in Laconia, stands ;
Where Pyrrha, with Deucalion, dexterous, climbs
To high Parnassus, from the o'erflowing flood !
O rightful home of Zeus, wherein the clouds,
Pelion on Ossa-like, piled hugely up,
Unfold for Alfred an imperial throne
High as the heavens, in vastness infinite !
Lo, where he calls his princes and his cou:s
And an array of horsemen, helmed and plumed,
And bids Antiquity rejoice with us !
But, now, King Alfred's court dissolves and forms
Anew ! The panoramic summer page
Of history, slowly slipping from crag to crag,
Blends Alfred's throne into a triple throne,
Whereto, behold what king, in armour, comes !
Now heaven's artillery wreathes welcomes, while
The first great Edward greets his royal peer !
Up to this triple throne these, our own kings,
Standing thereat, on either hand, invite
The founder of Hellenic liberty,
And, at their call, resplendent, Theseus comes.
And clustering courtiers mingle in the clouds :
Homer meets Milton on a celestial plain,
And Pericles, in Cromwell, finds a friend ;
The soul of Juliet lives within the soul
Of Sophocles, where immortality
Enthrones and crowns the melancholy Dane,
And Shakespeare crowns, in turn, Antigone.
And, now, the men of old and older days
Exchange, from their commutual realm of thought,
Fair phrases and well-sounding compliments :
But lo, where, on yon broad Acropolis,
Dazzling Pentelic marble columns rise !
Whose daring chisel incites to majesty
This temple of Athena Parthenos !
How breathe and live these ivory monuments ;
This famed Invincible Goddess of War ?
Let the clouds answer, ' Phidias once more waves,
As if o'er Attica, his magic wand ! '

The power of Pericles was to propose,
But, to dispose, lived only with the gods,
With Phidias, and th' supreme Olympian Jove.
Panathenæaic festivals we see,
Of Theseus, and of liberty, we sing,
Bays, to the brow of Aristotle, bind,
Build temples to Minerva, in the clouds,
Loitering, linger on legendary lore
And the divinity and power of Jove—
That we may see the glory of the Greeks;
The lights and shades of their philosophy;
See where their shining pathway leads to life;
Or, failing, lift our eyes to higher Light;
That Britain's glory may forever grow.

VII.

Now praise be given to God, the King of kings,
And anthems to the Lord of lords be sung!
For, on this world-wide broad, up-building day,
A seventh Edward comes to England's throne,
And, with him, Alexandra, Consort Queen—
A regal complement of kingly rule—
A rule wherein the king and parliament,
Within the laws unwritten, enact the laws
And guard the realm; a lasting rule, wherein
Security and right for all—is all!
And this is Britain's highest heritage—
Her birthright—and the purchase of her blood;
For, what availed great Alfred's reign, or what,
The great Confessor's? Or the heroic field
Where Harold fought, and William, conquering, came,
If mighty deeds and glorious death were all?
Who shall deny Britannia's ardent youth
The joy, the pride, the patriot fire he feels,
As, over flood and field, he fights once more—
And wins—the battles, by his fathers won!
But, is not victory, but a bubble, burst—

A shifting sand-bar on the shore of time - -
If valour be all? What's in a vast array
Of fields well fought against a foreign foe,
If, to the victor, government be naught?
Strongly to govern; to fight, and fight well;
Shall yet be England's praise, as in the past!
Prestige of arms—to foreign policy—conjoined,
Regard for justice, international,
And for our well-tried form of government,
Withal, a holding fast to "what we have"—
Shall form a tangible prop, rock-like, secure!
And "Peace with honour" shall with power abound!
So shall the nations learn rather to love
England than fear the foes of liberty!
And all that's best in either hemisphere,
In every continent, in every land,
Shall wield a power invincible for peace.

VIII.

Now rest we at the topmost arch of day,
And while, aloft along the sculptured clouds,
Alfred's high throne centres Antiquity
And all the valour of England's feudal reigns,
The flashing fires along the grim sea-walls
And bulwarks of Britannia's broadening zone
Send up a sacred flame around the towers
Of old Westminster, and the throne emblaze;
And in the spirit of that sacred flame
Britannia waits the coming of the king.

IX.

Not always, worthily, has the crown been worn
In England; and not always has its light
Shone as a lode-star to the people's will;
But, from the sacred fane of Winchester
And Wessex, and the time of Ethelred,
And of Canute the Dane, to where the good

Saint Edward, the Confessor King—the great
Restorer of the Saxon line—laid well
The deep foundations of the Abbey walls,
The golden shaft of light from Alfred's crown
Held steady course; and Westminster became
The pledge of him who wrought rather for Church
Than State, yet builded better than he thought;
And here his canonized bones found fitting rest.
Here, Harold and the Norman kings were crowned;
Here, Edward set the Coronation Stone;
And, whether from Scone or Egypt, came the light
Thereof, the sun-light of King Alfred's crown,
And of the crown of the Victorian Age,
Shall glory bring, and great magnificence.
And from the towers of Windsor shall be heard
A crowning and a benedictory voice,
And tower and Minster, alike, shall crown the king.
And he shall come to all the splendour of
The throne of his illustrious ancestors;
And so his crown shall come in solemn form.
He shall be robed in crimson of the morn,
Imperial purple and the gold of Ind.
And, by the king's command, and by the hand
Of York, the queen, anointed, shall receive
A crown, a diadem, of glittering gems.
And, constant, as the needle to the star,
Shall the exalted love and loyalty
Of every heart in Britain be constrained
By Alexandra's nod: and, while the blue
Midsummer sky enthrones the sculptured cloud;
And, steadfast as the wave-invited sail;
While nodding violets grow or lilies bloom,
The name of Alexandra shall be loved.
And ever shall the name of Edward live
And prosper in our loving memory;
For neither nationality, nor creed,
Nor corporate lust of gain, nor less nor more
Than equity, shall make, of life or law,
Whilst Edward, rightful King of England, reigns:

Nor shall the humblest poor in vain implead
The throne within the rights their fathers won :
Nor shall the parasite, on favour, fawn ;
Nor aught of wrong, unwhipt of justice go.
But, for the very right, the king shall rule ;
He shall invoke the sacred glorious past
Of Britain, graven on these Abbey walls ;
And, from the voice of sculptured eloquence,
Where dim-lit banners lend historic light,
And blend the Roman and the Gothic arch,
An answer, well-nigh audible, shall show
How lives the fount of honour in the crown,
And whence the rights of Magna-Charta came.
But lo, where now these blood-stained banners' beams
Piercing the passing centuries, confirm
The clearer rays of sixty years and four !
How rays and beams in showers of blessings fall
All round the throne, and cast a halo there.
Now, bending to this happy augury,
The king takes up the burden of the crown.
And now, behold, the people of England speak,
And, with uplifted voice, all glory give
Unto the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost,
As at the first, and now, and evermore
Shall be, unchangeable, the Mighty God.
Now, from the vaults of England's deathless dead,
Voices of heroes, kings and ministers,
Voices from our imperishable past,
Rustling on wings of approbation, float
Up and along the transept and the nave,
Up to the chancel and the very dome
Over the altar and King Edward's chair ;
One moment poise, and whisper of the past
And of their labours for the crown and state ;
Then in harmonious choruses they join
Our anthems and our prayers and praise to God ;
And, wafting tuneful greetings as they go,
Vanish as the swift light to shadowy rest.
Now solemnly the benediction falls,

And all our lingering anthems die within
The Chantry and the Chapels of the Kings.
Now joyous bells ring out a gladsome sound,
And cannon-voices lend a loud refrain;
Under the sea the soundless lightnings flash
Their swift-winged message to the expectant shores.
And now, by nearest kinsmen guarded round,
Guarded by kings and many a noble house,
And by the strong sons of the field and flood,
Forth, from the Minster to the multitude,
The new-crowned King and Queen of England come;
And, o'er the herald's clarion trumpet voice,
A sound, as of an unmoored mountain's fall,
Great London's acclamation madly tells.
Now, flaming to his purple shadowy couch,
Phœbus, along his Delian path of gold,
Proclaims the king is crowned! Long live the king!
And, ere the voices of the Solent sleep,
The sounding breakers on the distant shores
Of all the Britains lend their loud acclaim
For England's king and for Saint Edward's crown.

X.

O who that hath not loved the wave shall sing
The exulting song, or mystery, of the sea!
Or who that loves not London's roar shall tell
The joy that surged around the Minster walls!
But who that entered there shall paint the scene
Where majesty and royal grace were crowned;
Where golden lustre from the realms of Light
Descended lovingly upon the throne!
O rapturous vision of resplendent power
And praises wafted on the wings of prayer!
That was a scene where every measured song
Seemed to exemplify some heavenly dream—
Some rare prophetic vision of the morn—
And such a dream there was—a vision of
Transcendent joy, wherein supernal heights

Of radiant love's ethereal realm arose.
It was a waking vision of the grove ;
No dross alloyed the golden morning ray ;
For passion floated on celestial wings ;
And things but purely earthy of the earth
Seemed spiritualized and veiled in heavenly light.
And so the mist, on violet wings, released
The shadowy bosom of the slumbering lake ;
And half revealed, and half concealed, the hills.
Then came the lifting, life-inspiring breeze ;
And feeling, led by reason, fluttered forth
In quest of music and heart-helpful words.
So came they to the caves down where the gate
Of the primeval forest opens wide ;
Thence, canopied by leafy archways high,
And the mid-forest pines and sombre shade,
They wandered where, more awe-inspiring than
The mountain storm, the vaulted silence grew.
Then, lost in reverie or by wonder led,
Through many a glade and still, sequestered nook,
They found the quiet, restful hollow lands,
Where the arched elms, emblazoned by the stars,
And painted by the ruddy sunbeam, rose
To vast cathedral domes, and golden shafts
O'ershot the moss-grown tesselated floor.
It was a solemnly enchanting place—
A place wherein the will of man might spring
Strong in the will of God, as in an arch—
Where thought and feeling might in silence dwell,
Nor sound of rustling leaf, nor whisper, mar
The still, harmonious home of ecstasy.
And while each golden beam illumed the leaves
Whereon the scintillating silver fell
From out the stars, the filmy vapours joined
In minor concord in the blended rays,
Till altar, arch and aisle and leafy dome,
Harmonic, rose to an elysian fane.
And if the arching elms were what they seemed,
The walls were built of gems of purest ray ;

They seemed of ruby, blent in emerald hues ;
Of sapphire, beryl, onyx, topaz, all
Inlaid in jasper ; and the soft, subdued
Illumination of the mossy floors
Confirmed the light where fell the slanting shaft.
Such walls were well within the gate of heaven ;
A throne was there, and angels of the light ;
Eros, divine, might there an altar find ;
And there Uranian Venus, reverent, kneel.
But harmony dwelt not alone in hues ;
And feeling found heart-help in rhythmic words ;
For music faintly flowed from unseen choirs ;
Angelic voices through the chancel rang ;
And incense on the wings of worship rose
To Him that loves the temple of the heart.

XI.

And thought and feeling found in every voice
Of the deep forest a very tower of strength,
Foreshadowing there more light and firmer faith,
And the exalting power of righteousness
Unto a kneeling nation and a king.
So came the new historic day ; so fell
The mantling of the vesper hour. It was
A day for Britain's wide imperial zone
Of laurel groves and equatorial rays ;
Of bubbling springs and vapoury far blue hills ;
Of glaciers and illimitable snows.
A day of banners and of nodding plumes ;
Of gleaming lance and glittering uniform ;
Of royal bounty, fêtes and beacon lights,
And bonfires on the farthest lands ; and red
Reflected flambeaux dancing in the waves,
Rekindling the fast fading crimson clouds ;
A day for which an Alexander might
Have knelt in reverence at Achilles' tomb,
And craved the mantle of the conqueror.
But while the day smiled on Autocracy,

Saluting many a sovereign-absolute,
As if in memory of some Norman king,
Yet England loved her monarch all the more
For precedent whereby the crown had come
To magnify the power of parliament—
The sovereign people's mandatory voice.
So came the day to laud our regnant rule,
And to imperialize democracy;
To claim the more how, to the perfect path
Of liberty, our path of empire leads.
It was a day when, like the lion's roar,
Up from our new found fields of Africa
Britannic cheers in mighty waves o'erwhelmed
Imperious London's loud impetuous voice—
As when the devouring sea leaps and engulfs
The boisterous, babbling murmur of the shore.
And when the imperial, widening orb of day
Shone o'er the shimmering iridescent waves
Where float the king's defenders of the sea,
Loud choruses along the Solent rolled
And shook the deep foundations of the earth;
While Neptune, brandishing his trident, woke
The volleyed thunder echoing from the rocks,
And vivid lightning pierced the flaming clouds
And proudly mirrored England's fiercer fire.

XII.

So great a day means something more than pomp—
Something beyond mere baubles and vain show—
The tawdry tinsel of a holiday
Shall crumble into dust and be forgot—
A pyramid or Parthenon shall fall—
But this day stands for more than monuments!
Its vaulting dome o'ersprings the valorous deeds
Whereon, broad-based, Britannia's kingdom rests,
And sends from out that lustrous arch the light
Of our own deeds and marks the day our own.

And louder, from this day, shall Britain's voice
Leap to the level of the coming years
And to the splendour of their higher plane
Wherein her laws and language shall be known
And spoken by the rulers of the earth.
Nor shall her light or empire-building cease
While aught of day or darkness rules the world.
Walled by the rock-ribbed sea, alert, alone,
Yet freed from narrow insularity,
She shall her splendid isolation hold,
For a defence and world-wide bond of peace.
And in that cause her sword—a fiery flame,
Like to the conquering blade on Creçy's field—
Sharp as the meteor's flash, and swifter than
The shafted arrows of the sun, shall cleave
The helm and shining armour of the foe.
Nor shall a Briton, fighting, fall in vain;
What though the fortunes of the fight be veiled
Within the valley of that narrow land
'Twixt glorious death and victory's high hills!
He falls, nor knows of aught but duty done;
Enough for him, if comrades keep the field
Where valour, falling, lives in valorous deeds.
And each imperial builder shall be borne
Aloft as a Colossus where he falls;
For England's glory lies not mainly in
Her crags and peaks, and power upon the seas,
But in her sons, born of the crags and waves,
Her walls of oak, that launched her liberty,
And in the blood-red paths of her defence.
Then bind the laurel to the victor's brow!
For, in the sunlight of his gleaming sword,
Spring all the arrows of the sword of state.
Bind, then, the laurel to the builder's brow!
For he, the founder of this race of kings,
Shall share the glory and honour of the crown.

Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand nine hundred and two, by GEORGE W. GROTE, at the Department of Agriculture.